October 25, 1989

Town of Los Altos Hills
Earthquake Update

WHY THIS UPDATE?

Much work remains to be done so that all of us can recover from the earthquake and prepare for any subsequent emergencies or problems that we face. If you need help, or if you can offer help, we hope to provide the information you need in this newsletter, prepared for Los Altos Hills residents.

OVERVIEW

The Town as a whole was extremely fortunate. No major injuries have been reported. In addition, we did not incur anywhere near the physical damage suffered by some of our neighboring communities.

Major problems for the Town centered on the loss of our basic utilities--water, gas, electricity, and telephone service--and the length of time it took to restore some of those utilities to some residents.

By most reports, our response systems worked well. The Fire District was able to respond to the one fire (a grass fire off of Page Mill) and the 36 other calls (most of which required medical aid) that came into the 911 system Tuesday night. Town officials and staff kept Town Hall open Tuesday night, completed a visual inspection of most of the Town within the first hour after the earthquake, and contacted people throughout the Town to ensure they were safe and to let them know to call us at Town Hall if they needed any help.

Our Neighborhood Emergency Coordinators, who assessed the situation in their neighborhoods, reassured their neighbors whenever necessary, and kept in contact with Town Hall, did a superb job. (More about them later.)

Our residents who are also HAM operators--including Rob Hamilton, Rick Ellinger, and Andy Kirk--established contact between Town neighborhoods and all responding agencies to ensure that emergency services knew of all problems and could respond effectively.

People with special skills and equipment, such as the Taaffe brothers, provided help to utility crews in restoring service and cleaning up debris.

And finally, many other residents took it upon themselves to tour their neighborhoods to assess damages and visit individual neighbors who might need assistance. As a result, many problems were solved before they could escalate and become emergencies.

We would like to thank everyone who worked so hard to help their fellow residents of the Town.

The Town did sustain about $10 million in damage to approximately 30 homes throughout the Town. Five homes have been condemned and will have to be demolished. Another 10 have entire rooms or wings that are likely to be demolished. An additional 15 homes suffered damage in excess of $100,000. Most damage occurred to older homes that had not been built under the latest seismic standards.

The Town also sustained significant damage to the public infrastructure. Purissima Hills Water District (which serves about two-thirds of the Town) lost the one-million-gallon La Cresta water tank and suffered several large main breaks.

We are currently estimating $100,000 in damage to our roads and storm drainage system (although with some of our roads it is tough to tell!). And we are in the process of inspecting

the entire sewer system to see what damage it may have sustained.

WHERE TO GET HELP

Please don't try to do everything yourself. There are a large number of agencies and programs that can provide help, no matter what type of problems you may be facing. It seems like each day we hear about someone who is reticent to go back into part of their house, who has a broken water pipe and hasn't been able to turn on the water since October 17, or who has a child still bothered by memories or dreams of the earthquake.

Emergency help. Call 911.

Non-Emergency Help. As has been reported in the newspapers, Disaster Assistance Centers have been set up in each affected county. These centers offer assistance from federal, state, and county agencies, as well as voluntary organizations such as the Red Cross and Salvation Army. (It is easy to infer from the newspapers that these are federal aid centers only.) Assistance programs being offered at these centers include:

Emergency food clothing, shelter, and medical assistance

Emergency housing assistance

Individual and family grants of up to $10,400 to meet immediate needs

Home and personal property loans at rates as low as 4 percent

Unemployment assistance

Business loans, again at rates as low as 4 percent

Farm grants and loans, to repair irrigation systems, structures, and fences

Tax assistance. You can get an immediate refund on your federal income tax. You can also get a reduction in your property taxes

Insurance assistance. Even if you didn't have earthquake insurance, you should talk to your insurance agent right away

Legal services, including contracting problems and landlord problems

Veterans benefits

Assistance to the elderly, including transportation, meals, and home care

Financial assistance, including early withdrawal of time deposits without penalty

The Disaster Assistance Centers can be called at 1-800-462-9029. The two closest centers are:

Jewish Community Center, 14855 Oka Road at Lark Avenue in Los Gatos.

Jefferson Union High School District Building (formerly the Serramonte High School), 699 Serramonte Boulevard in Daly City.

Please continue to read the newspapers and local bulletin boards for any changes in the services being offered.

Los Altos Garbage Company is picking up extra garbage cans at no charge to the resident, to allow you to dispose of any items ruined by the quake.

REBUILDING OR REPAIRING YOUR HOME

Dave Linebarger, the Town's Building Official, and Bill Carino, Town Building Inspector, are inspecting homes throughout the Town. Dave and Bill have also retained the services of two structural engineers for very difficult problems. Please don't hesitate to call for an inspection if you have health and safety concerns. If the problems are relatively minor, a licensed building contractor can tell you what work will need to be done.

Dave and Bill are assigning highest priority to these inspections, as well as to reviewing and approving any needed repairs or reconstruction. As long as you are rebuilding exactly what was damaged and are using a licensed contractor, you may proceed with your work, before you obtain a building permit. We would recommend, however, that you talk to Dave or Bill first. They may be able to save you time and money.

TOWN OF LOS ALTOS HILLS
NEIGHBORHOOD EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS QUESTIONNAIRE

The town is part of the county wide Emergency Preparedness Program and the information collected will be distributed to your Neighborhood Coordinator to be used in the event of a disaster.

NAME:_____

ADDRESS:_____ CROSS STREET:_____

PHONE:_____

SKILLS: First Aid___ CPR___ Firefighting___ Rescue___

Damage Assessment___ Shelter Management___

Construction (carpentry, electrical, plumbing, etc.)_____

Communications (licensed ham operator)____

Any other skill or service not mentioned above:

_____

RESOURCES: Heavy machinery (specify):_____

Work tools (specify):_____ Generator____ Water Tank___

Pool____ Well____ Horses____ 4-wheel drive____

Medical equipment_____ Other_____

The Town has been divided into geographical areas. We hope to have two neighborhood coordinators and several block coordinators for each area. If you would be willing to volunteer please indicate below:

Neighborhood Coordinator_____ Block Coordinator_____

As Neighborhood Coordinator you will be the liaison between the Town staff and your neighborhood. You will assist in identifying the resources and needs of your neighborhood. As a Block Coordinator you will be the liaison between your individual block and the Neighborhood Coordinator. The Town will provide extensive support, guidance and materials.

PLEASE RETURN THIS INFORMATION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

Town of Los Altos Hills
26379 Fremont Road
Los Altos Hills, California 94022

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We also recommend that people with homes on potentially unstable slopes retain a geotechnical consultant before taking any further steps.

Town residents should also be cautious in hiring contractors to repair damage. Unqualified or unlicensed contractors may not be able to provide you with the help you need. Any extra time involved in shopping around for the best contractor will pay dividends.

We recommend that you check references and be sure that the contractor has previous experience with the kind of work you need done. In addition, at a minimum, you should get a description of the work to be done, a cost estimate, and a completion date in writing.

We are also maintaining a list of contractors that can do the repair work. We can provide that to you, at your request.

HOW TO HELP OTHERS

Residents of both Los Altos Hills and neighboring communities could use your help. Many citizens have already responded to requests for assistance.

We do, however, have an immediate need for temporary housing. If you are able to offer housing assistance, please contact any City Councilmember or the Community Services Agency (968-0836).

The Salvation Army is also in need of canned goods and winter clothes (including warm sweaters, coats, parkas, raingear, woolen caps, etc.). We will be collecting those in the Heritage House at Town Hall the entire week of October 30 to November 3. If you can donate any, please just drop them by during normal business hours.

California Disaster Services would appreciate all types of volunteer services and resources. Call them at 646-5908.

Local offices of the American Red Cross are taking in-kind donations. Financial donations can be made to the American Red Cross Disaster Relief Fund, P.O. Box 37243, Washington, D. C. 20013 or by calling 1-800-453-9000.

ONSET OF THE RAINY SEASON

The quake has made hillside property especially vulnerable to slippage, once the soil is saturated.

Residents should check your storm systems, downspouts, gutters, and other drains to be sure that all water is safely directed away from structures and is appropriately dissipated.

If your hill is bare, you should place a barrier between the ground and the rain. Straw mulch and grass seed are inexpensive and efficient means of protecting against erosion. The Town also has sand and bags available for your use.

IF YOU HAVE CONCERNS OR QUESTIONS

Please don't hesitate to come down and see us or call us at Town Hall (We are normally open from 8 to 5, Monday through Friday, and can be reached at 941-7222.) Councilmembers can be reached through Town Hall or at their homes.

In addition, a substantial portion of the City Council meeting that will be held at 7:15 p.m. on November 1 will be devoted to the earthquake. If you have any concerns or ideas that the Council or other residents of the Town need to hear, please attend the meeting and share your thoughts with us.

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

The Town has had a Neighborhood Emergency Network Plan in effect since 1985. Each neighborhood has volunteers, a neighborhood coordinator, and a HAM radio operator who can communicate neighborhood needs to Town Hall. Unfortunately, the Plan needs updating, since some of the original coordinators and volunteers are no longer available.

The Town Safety Committee (a volunteer committee comprising seven Town residents) has been working on updating this network for

several months. The Committee is hoping that all existing volunteers will continue, and that additional residents will also be interested in becoming involved.

The committee is planning for each neighborhood to have two neighborhood coordinators and several block coordinators. The program will develop a self-help network between families and neighborhoods through a skills and resource bank, that will include a listing of tools, emergency communication equipment, materials, and neighborhood members who have special skills and resources to share.

Committee Chairperson Marcia Thompson is asking all Town residents to fill out the enclosed questionnaire, fold it over, and mail it to Town Hall. The goal is to develop a neighborhood network fully prepared to meet the challenges of any future disaster.

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